DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 314 407 SP 031 916

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TITLE Career Dissatisfaction among Alabama Teachers: A Follow-Up.
PUB DATE Nov 89
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (Little Rock, AR, November 7-10, 1989). Appendix (one page) contains small print.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Career Change; Elementary Secondary Education; *Job Satisfaction; *Multiple Employment; Professional Recognition; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Burnout; Teacher Characteristics; *Teacher Salaries; Teacher Shortage; *Teaching Conditions

ABSTRACT

This study replicated earlier state-wide studies of Alabama, Tennessee, and Texas teachers with a current sample of Alabama teachers. Data from a random sample of 196 teachers in the fall of 1988 revealed that more than one-third of the state's teachers are seriously considering leaving the profession. They cite inadequate pay as their major reason for leaving, followed by stress and burnout, poor working conditions, and lack of support from administrators and the public. The group expressing plans for a probable career change are mature, experienced, and highly educated. They come from all types of school systems, and their distribution across grade levels does not differ significantly from other teachers. Among this group of highly dissatisfied teachers, more than one-third moonlight and have extra summer jobs to supplement their pay. Not only are there more moonlighting teachers among those seriously considering leaving the profession but, in addition, there are significantly more male teachers who moonlight. Since the state has recently reported a "critical shortage of males" among its teachers, these data indicate an escalation of that problem. (JD)

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Career Dissatisfaction Among Alabama Teachers: A Follow-Up

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Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association, Little Rock, Arkansas, November 7-10, 1989

SP 031 916

Concerns for Professionalism:
Salaries, Moonlighting, and Teacher Attrition

As a profession, teaching struggles with image problems. The Holmes Report calls it a "poorly esteemed profession" (A Report of the Holmes Group, 1986, p.6). It is still perceived by many as a low-status job even though its educational requirements and performance expectations have increased considerably. Concerns for elevating the status of the profession have been expressed by many and recommendations have been made "to make teaching a more rewarding and respected profession" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983. p.30). Paramount among the concerns for professional status is the recognition that status is closely linked to success in recruiting and retaining new talent for the profession.

When practical measures of professional status have been examined, teaching has traditionally received low marks. On two of the most measurable indicators of high-status professions, high pay and low attrition from the profession, teaching has not scored well. Surveys of teachers in Alabama, Tennessee, and Texas have revealed that: 1) salaries are low, and 2) career dissatisfaction and attrition are high (Henderson & Schlesinger, 1988; Tishler & Ernest, 1985; Wisniewski & Hilty, 1987). To make matters worse, many teachers have attempted to supplement their low salaries by moonlighting--taking an additional after-hours job. Most of these second jobs are not professional. Rather,

they are low-status jobs requiring little education. The adverse impact of moonlighting on professionalism is substantial.

The purpose of this study was to replicate the earlier state-wide studies of Alabama, Tennessee, and Texas teachers with a current sample of Alabama teachers. Teaching salaries, moonlighting practices, and various elements of career satisfaction and dissatisfaction were explored. Comparisons between data collected from Alabama teachers in 1984 and data currently collected were also made.

Method

Subjects

A computer-generated random sample of teachers who were members of the Alabama Education Association was surveyed in the study. Questionnaires were received by 402 teachers and responses were returned by 196 giving a response rate of 49%.

Instrument

The instrument used in this study was the one developed for the study of Texas teachers (Darby, Henderson, & Maddux, 1982). After initial field testing with graduate education classes at Sam Houston State University and a random sample of 100 teachers in Houston, the instrument was revised and used in that and subsequent studies. A copy of the instrument is in Appendix A.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed by computing frequencies and percentages on responses to questionnaire items. In addition, data were grouped for comparison according to relevant

demographics, and the chi square statistic was used for these analyses. The criterion for statistical significance was set at .05.

Results

A demographic profile of Alabama teachers in 1984 (N=284) and 1988 (N=196) is shown in Table 1. The 1988 profile was closely aligned with the 1984 profile. The gender distribution among respondents was the characteristic which showed the greatest change with approximately a 5% shift occurring from male to female since 1984. A large majority of Alabama teachers had at least a master's degree in both 1984 (69.9%) and in 1988 (71.1%) and in both samples over half the teachers taught in rural school systems.

Table 1

Characteristic	1984	1988
Gender		
Male	20.6%	15.4%
Female	79.4%	84.6%
Highest Degree		
Bachelors	30.0%	28.9%
Masters	67.4%	69.0%
Doctorate	2.5%	2.1%
Type of School System		
Urban	27.4%	23.5%
Suburban	20.0%	21.9%

Rural	52.6%	54.5%
Grade Level		
K-5	43.3%	41.1%
6-8	21.6%	20.6%
9-12	34.8%	38.3%
Average Years Teaching Experience	13.2	15.6

Table 2 shows a financial/employment profile of Alabama teachers in 1984 and 1988. The salary average of the sample (approximately 70% of which has at least a master's degree) increased $7676 in four years. During that time, there was a slight decline in the percent with extra employment in the summer, and an increase in the percent who moonlight.

Table 2

Financial/Employment Profile of Alabama Teachers

Characteristic	1984	1988
Average Salary	$17,259	$24,935
Percent Employed in Summer	25.5%	23.7%
Average Summer Earnings	$1,435	$3,082
Percent That Moonlight	23.7%	28.0%
Average Moonlight Earnings	$2,838	$4,186

Table 3 shows the career plans of Alabama teachers. In the 1984 sample and in the 1988 sample more than one teacher in three were "seriously considering leaving the profession".

Table 3

Career Plans of Alabama Teachers

Options	1984	1988
Probably Leaving the Profession	37.7%	36.7%
Not Leaving Profession	62.3%	63.3%

Data are presented in Table 4 comparing characteristics of the 1988 sample of Alabama teachers who are seriously considering leaving the profession with those who are not. There were no statistically significant differences on any of these characteristics between the two groups.

Table 4

Characteristics of 1988 Teachers

Compared by Career Plans

	Career Plans	
Characteristic	Leaving (N=72)	Not Leaving (N=124)
Salary (Mean)	$25,384	24,677
Age (Mean)	43.5 years	39.4 years
Years Teaching (Mean)	17.4 years	14.0 years

Gender		
Male	18.3	14.2
Female	81.7	85.8
Marital Status		
Married	73.2	83.5
Single	21.1	14.0
Other	5.6	2.5
Highest Degree		
Bachelors	27.5	29.8
Masters	69.6	68.4
Doctorate	2.9	1.8
Type of School System		
Urban	20.0	26.3
Suburban	27.7	19.5
Rural	52.3	54.2
Grade Level		
K-5	33.8	45.0
6-8	26.2	18.0
9-12	40.0	36.9

Table 5 reports the reasons given by teachers seriously considering leaving the profession. Inadequate pay was the most prevalent reason cited.

Table 5

Reasons for Leaving

Reason	Cited by
Inadequate Pay	39%
Stress, burn out	23%
Poor Working Conditions (Paperwork, Non-teaching Responsibilities, No Advancement)	14%
Lack of Administrative Support	13%
Lack of Public Support & Research	11%
Student Behavior	10%
Retirement	9%
No Adult Interaction	3%

Comparisons were made on extra summer jobs between those teachers considering leaving and those not. A chi square analysis revealed that a significantly higher proportion of the group considering leaving had extra summer jobs than did the other group. These data are reported in Table 6.

Table 6

Relationship between Career Plans and Summer Jobs

	Summer Job	No Summer Job
Probably Leaving	34.3%	65.7%
Not Leaving	17.5%	82.5%

Chi square = 5.99, df=1 (significant, p<.01)

Group comparisons were also made on the proportions that were moonlighting. A significantly larger proportion of the group considering leaving the profession reported moonlighting than did the other group. Table 7 shows these data.

Table 7

Relationship between Career Plans and Moonlighting

	Moonlights	Does Not Moonlight
Probably Leaving	36.6%	63.4%
Not Leaving	22.8%	77.2%

Chi square = 4.13, df=1 (significant, p<.05)

Further analysis on moonlighting behavior showed that a significantly greater proportion of male teachers moonlighted than did female teachers. These data are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Relationship between Moonlighting and Gender

	Moonlights	Does Not Moonlight
Male	60.0%	40.0%
Female	22.2%	77.8%

Chi square = 16.02, df=1 (significant, p<.001)

The data in Table 9 show the proportion of elementary and secondary teachers that reported moonlighting. The results of a chi square analysis with these data indicated a statistically significant relationship between moonlighting and grade level.

Table 9

Relationship between Moonlighting and Grade Level

	Moonlights	Does Not Moonlight
Elementary	20.6%	79.4%
Secondary	41.2%	58.8%

Chi square = 7.68, df=1 (significant, $p<.01$)

Conclusions

Data from a random sample of Alabama teachers in the fall of 1988 revealed that more than one-third of the state's teachers (36.7%) are seriously considering leaving the profession. They cite inadequate pay most often as their reason for leaving, followed by stress and burn out, poor working conditions, and lack of support from administrators and from the public. The group expressing plans for a probable career change are mature, experienced, and highly educated: their average age is 43 years, they have an average of 17 years teaching experience, and 71% have at least a master's degree. They come from all types of school systems--urban, suburban, and rural, and their distribution across grade levels does not differ significantly from other teachers. If they act on their plans to leave

teaching, Alabama education will sustain a considerable talent drain.

Among this group of highly dissatisfied teachers, 36.6% moonlight and 34.3% have extra summer jobs to supplement their pay. They differ significantly on this phenomenon of additional employment with those teachers who are not planning to leave teaching, 22.8% of whom moonlight and 17.5% have extra summer jobs. Not only are there more moonlighting teachers among those seriously considering leaving the profession, there are significantly more male teachers who moonlight. Since the State has recently reported a "critical shortage of males" among its teachers (State Department of Education, 1988, p.22), these data indicate an escalation of that problem.

Discussion

The implications of such potential attrition in the teaching profession extend beyond the immediate dilemma for Alabama and for other states with similar data. The entire profession suffers from the probable loss of experienced, highly educated professionals and the status of the profession is thus diminished. As inadequate compensation and poor working conditions hinder the profession's ability to retain good teachers, those same factors also hinder the profession's ability to recruit new talent. The necessity for moonlighting, so evident in the teachers considering leaving, further confounds the status struggle and impacts adversely on both professional stature and classroom performance.

As teacher educators consider ways to enhance professionalism by elevating program standards and increasing teacher performance, attention must also be given to the factors that undermine those efforts. It appears that public support for teachers, both financial support and philosophical support, is a necessary context for substantive professional improvement.

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APPENDIX A

TEACHERS' JOB SATISFACTION AND MOONLIGHTING

DIRECTIONS: Please circle or answer all items that apply to you. Add comments if you find a question to be vague.

1. What is your age?_____Sex?___M___F

2. Marital Status . . . . . Married Single Other

3. If married does your spouse work?. . . Yes No

4. What is your highest degree? . . . . . Bachelor's Master's Doctorate

5. Are you the major bread winner in your household? . . . . . Yes No

6. Are you seriously considering leaving the teaching profession? . . . . . Yes No
   If yes, why are you considering leaving? _____

   _____

7. In what type of school system do you teach? . . . . . Urban Suburban Rural

8. What grade level do you primarily teach? K-5 6-8 9-12

9. How many years have you taught in the public schools? . . . . . Years_____

10. What is your current teaching salary per year? . . . . . $_____

11. Do you have an extra job during the summer when you are not under contract to your school system . . . . . Yes No

12. How much do you earn extra during the summer? . . . . . $_____

13. Do you have an extra job during the regular school year to supplement your teaching salary? (Include school-related and nonschool-related jobs. For example: school bus driver, salesperson, bookkeeper, etc.) . . . . Yes No

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If your answer to Question 13 is yes, please answer the following questions.

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14. Do you feel that the quality of your teaching would improve if you did not have a second job during the regular school year? . . . . . Yes No

15. How much extra money do you earn during the regular school year from the moonlighting job? . . . . . $_____

16. How many hours per week during the regular school year do you spend working at the extra job? . . . . . Hours_____

17. Would you quit working the second job if your salary was increased adequately? Yes No

18. How large a raise in your teaching salary would you have to get to enable you to give up moonlighting during the regular school year? . . . . . $_____

19. What is your extra job during the regular school year? (Please give a job title such as bookkeeper, farmer, clerk, waitress, etc., not the name of your employer.) . . . . . _____